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C O N F I D E N T I A L LJUBLJANA 000438

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SI](#)

SUBJECT: COM LUNCH WITH SLOVENIAN PRIME MINISTER JANSKA:
GETTING SLOVENES INTO IRAQ

REF: (A) STATE 118655 (B) LJUBLJANA 61

Classified By: Amb.Thomas Robertson for Reasons 1.4 (B) AND (D)

1. (C) Summary: Prime Minister Janska told COM at lunch, June 28, that next week the GOS planned to review options for sending a team of trainers to Iraq. Janska made clear his preference to go forward with a training contingent in Iraq, but noted that there was resistance from his coalition partner, the Slovenian People's Party (SLS), towards such a proposal. If the government decides to do this, he indicated, it will need to work on a public affairs strategy, although he said that, despite strong media and opposition hostility to going into Iraq, public polling showed almost half the Slovenian population was supportive. Other subjects discussed will be covered septel. End summary.

Thanks for your help so far

2. (C) At the end of a two hour one-on-one lunch at COM's residence with Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janska, COM raised the Slovenian contribution to NATO operations in Iraq. Thanking him for the GOS contribution to NTM-1 of EUR 100 thousand, and the USD 5 million of equipment to Iraq, and noting the GOS offer to train Iraqis outside of Iraq, COM indicated that NATO and Iraqis were most interested in seeing trainers on the ground in Iraq, emphasizing that many of the billets for Iraqis for training outside of Iraq remained unfilled. COM highlighted in particular the proposal to send five mentors to the National Command Center (NCC) in Baghdad, noting that there were already US and UK mentors working there with Iraqi Ministry of Interior officers, and that the NCC compound was secure. COM provided Ref A talking points to the PM as a non-paper.

Janska: Providing trainers to Iraq is the right thing to do

3. (C) In response to COM's comment that the U.S. appreciated the political seriousness of such a decision, given Slovenian reluctance back in 2003 to support our actions in Iraq, Janska said that his government had never said it would not participate in Iraq. He reminded COM of the resistance in the press and opposition when he had said in Brussels in January that his government would reevaluate its policy, including the idea of sending troops to Iraq (see ref B). Despite this, Janska made clear that he thought sending trainers to Iraq was the right thing to do, and he noted that his government had this on its agenda for disposition in the coming week. He volunteered to contact COM after the government meeting with the outcome.

Resistance in the junior coalition party

4. (C) The problem he had, Janska continued, was that there was resistance within the party of his coalition partner, the Slovenian People's Party (SLS), to sending any Slovenians into Iraq. Granted, he said, since this was a NATO operation, he would not have to go to the entire Parliament for approval for an Iraq-based operation. His government would, however, have to brief the Foreign Affairs Committee, and the committee would vote. If the committee voted against the motion, Janska would have a much more serious political problem on his hands.

Polls show almost 50 per cent favor support for Iraq

5. (C) That said, Janska did not think that this was an insurmountable problem. Although media and opposition hostility to the idea was strong, separate public polling the government had done showed that there was almost 50 percent support for such an engagement. Janska repeated that as a former Defense Minister he understood well that being a member of NATO meant being a provider of security to the alliance, and he repeated that he was fully on board with the need to provide the Iraqis whatever assistance we could so that they could provide their own security.

16. (C) Jansa said that if he could get his government to move forward with this proposal, it would have to work hard on putting together a public relations strategy. COM noted that of course this was in support of a NATO and Iraqi initiative, but that the U.S. would clearly be ready to assist where it can. Jansa agreed that COM should provide FM

Rupel with the same demarche as it would help to feed the discussion the cabinet would have later.

17. (C) Comment: We provided reftel proposal to MFA later the same day, and COM will discuss with FM Rupel at dinner the evening of June 28, before Rupel's departure June 30 for Washington. Jansa did not hesitate to make clear that he felt helping Iraq in Iraq was the right thing to do. He did not hint how he might be able to deliver the SLS to support a proposal to send Slovenian trainers/mentors to Iraq, but this did not seem to concern him particularly. Earlier in the lunch he had spoken favorably of British PM Tony Blair's leadership in supporting the war in Iraq even when it was very unpopular at home. COM got the sense that that is the model Jansa would like to follow, showing leadership and working to convince his fellow citizens that helping Iraq in Iraq is the right thing to do.
ROBERTSON

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